DOCUMENT RESUME

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TITLE	Learning Centers in the Classroom (Part of the Series: Developments in Classroom Instruction). Description of Teacher Inservice Education Materials.
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ABSTRACT

The inservice teacher education package described here focuses on skill building in instructional, organizational, and managerial classroom techniques for developing and implementing learning centers. Seven specific learning centers are discussed, the subjects including microscopes, telling time, China, mathematics, economics, and adjectives. Directions on how to develop each learning center are outlined. Information is provided on the content, purposes, activities, and resources involved with the inservice package. A critique, ordering information, and a history of development of the package are also included. (DS)

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DESCRIPTION OF TEACHER IN-SERVICE EDUCATION MATERIALS

A. SUMMARY INFORMATION

Title: LEARNING CENTERS IN THE CLASSROOM (part of the series: Developments in Classroom Instruction)

Publication Date(s): 1976

Intended Users: Inservice, preservice teachers who are seeking information about learning centers as an effective teaching-learning technique that help students develop skills for independent learning

Grade Level(s): Elementary grades

Number: One to any number

Primary Focus: The demonstration of skill building in instructional, organizational and managerial classroom techniques for developing and implementing learning centers is the focus.

School subject(s) and/or in-service topic(s) covered:

School subjects include: social studies, mathematics and science. Topics covered are: general discussion of learning centers, their effectiveness in learning and teaching. Covered are 7 learning centers; the subjects of these include: microscopes, telling time, China, mathematics, economics and adjectives. Also included are suggestions for developing a learning center on an affective area of human awareness.

What participant does in using the materials:

The user reads the first two chapters for background information on learning centers. Then, he/she will find descriptions of 7 learning centers. Directions on how to develop each learning center are clear. Teacher reads the objectives, gathers the material and equipment listed, sets up the learning center, gives activities to students, and evaluates students' work.

Resources:

Teacher needs space in the classroom to set up a learning center. Material and equipment varies according to each learning center. In general, though, it is simple and cheap to obtain. Tape recorder, film projector, microscope, scissors, library books, maps, commercial clocks, etc. are needed for some learning centers.

Describer critique:

Good suggestions are given to teachers on how to develop a learning center as well as providing excellent illustrations of how the learning center can look. The book also offers good and brief background information on the usefulness of learning centers as a teaching technique. It provides the user with information that may be adapted easily to classroom conditions.

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B. IN-DEPTH INFORMATION

Title: LEARNING CENTERS IN THE CLASSROOM (part of the series: Developments in Classroom Instruction)

Publication Date(s): 1976

Intended Users: Inservice, preservice teachers who are seeking information about learning centers as an effective teaching-learning technique that help students develop skills for independent learning

Grade Level(s): Elementary grades

Number: One to any number

Primary Focus: The demonstration of skill building in instructional, organizational and managerial classroom techniques for developing and implementing learning centers is the focus.

1.0 PURPOSES:

Rationale

It is stated at the beginning of the book: "At a time when the recognition of the need for individualization and motivation for effective learning might seem to be in conflict with shrinking school budgets, the classroom learning center is an effective and economical means of maintaining good educational practice." Later, in the first chapter, the author continues: "There are a number of teaching-learning techniques that can be used effectively to help students develop the skills of independent learning. One is the learning center."

Goals

Although the author does not mention any general statements of anticipated outcomes for the product, it may be inferred that the general expectations for what should result from the use of this product are: to encourage teachers to try out learning centers in the classrooms by supplying them with "lists of materials, suggestions for the placement of equipment, study plans and evaluation guides for learning centers in a variety of subject areas."

Objectives

The following is an example of the objectives stated for one of the learning centers called Our Mathematics Laboratory: "This learning center was set up to give students an opportunity to practice and use the understandings and skills which they were acquiring from instructional groups in mathematics...this learning center gave students a chance to practice and reinforce their learning, it gave the teacher a valuable opportunity to find out which students were, or were not, able to apply the understandings and skills...taught in instructional groups. Thus, it gave the teacher an opportunity to teach individual students and a solid basis for planning the specifics of successive instruction."

2.0 CONTENT — Scope and Sequencing of Topics:

The book is divided into 4 parts:

1. Purpose of Learning Centers (pp 9-14).

2. Establishing and Using Learning Centers (pp 17-25)--The teacher, getting started, specific how to's, deciding what's best.

3. Examples for Study (pp 29-59)--Seven examples are included. Each example contains: purpose for designing it, materials and equipment, activities, evaluation and extensions. The following is the list of learning centers described:

   "Take a closer look"
   "Everything is beautiful"
   "Adjective alley"
   "What time is it?"
   "Seeing China"
   "Our mathematics laboratory"
   "Everyday economics"

4. Annotated Bibliography. Lists 7 books, each with its respective short summary.

3.0 ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES INVOLVED IN USE OF PRODUCT

3.1 Description of main in-service activities:

User reads first two chapters for background information on learning centers. Then, 7 detailed models of learning centers are described. At the beginning of each learning center description the objectives are stated. This is followed by a list of materials and equipment, a list of student activities suggested to the teacher, an evaluation section, and finally, a section called extension--where suggestions are given to the reader on how to change or adapt the learning center throughout the school year.

3.2 Help given in use of product:

The material is all included in a self-contained book (64 pages). There are no manuals or guides with it. Each learning center includes a detailed illustration of spatial placement to help the reader make a learning center as functional as possible. The product also includes an annotated bibliography with short summaries of each book listed. This helps the user select more accurately a book which suits his/her needs.

4.0 EVALUATION OF TEACHER INSERVICE LEARNING

Each learning center has an evaluation section. The following is an example of evaluation for a learning center called "Everyday economics."

"Guide questions: (1) How much information did the students gather before assessing one item to be a better bargain than another? (2) How sound is the logic of their arguments for preferring one product over another? (3) Over a period of time, how many students are able to develop a workable personal budget? (4) How many are actually able to make their large purchase as a result of budgeting and saving?"

5.0 ORDERING INFORMATION

5.1 Resources required/recommended:

One copy of the book per participant is recommended. Different materials and equipment will be needed according to the learning center(s) that the teacher decides to use in the classroom. In general, materials and equipment are cheap to buy or make (e.g., dark glass bottles, books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, worksheets, brands of products, etc.). Nevertheless, there are other materials which may be more expensive and difficult to find (e.g., filmstrips on fractions, decimals, graphs and percents, tape recorder, film projector, filmstrips on China, commercial clock, books about clocks and telling time, microscopes, etc.). Teachers need to use a small area in the classroom to set up a learning center. Time needed for developing and applying each learning center depends entirely on the teacher's initiative to expand or reduce the activities. Minimum of 1 school semester is needed to try out all 7 learning centers in the classroom.

5.2 Distributor name/address:

National Education Association
Publications Order Department

The Academic Bldg
Saw Mill Rd
West Haven, CT 06516
(203) 934-2669

5.3 Components/approximate costs:

Component	Purchase	Rental	No. Req.	Reusable
LEARNING CENTERS IN THE CLASSROOM	$2.50	--	1/participant	Yes

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6.0 HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Identification of the developer:

The material was edited by Jimmy E. Nations, curriculum specialist who was former assistant director of MCPS (Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools). The learning centers "have been reused and adapted to provide continuity and consistency." Credit for the original conception and design goes to the following: "Take a closer look" - Harriet Murphy; "Everything is beautiful" - Ann Hannapel; "Adjective alley" - Martha Beshers; "What time is it?" - Analee Brooks; "Seeing China" - Ronald Webb; "Our mathematics laboratory" - Margaret Goins; "Everyday economics" - Eleanor Curd.

6.2 How developed and when:

The material was developed in 1976. "Though the material was written by Ms. Neubauer, the ideas came from numerous teachers, teacher specialists, and supervisors who participated in conferences and workshops on the topic and who reviewed written materials and gave suggestions for revisions...the learning centers were developed by teachers, principals, and parents who participated in an inservice course taught by Betty Holden, a classroom teacher in MCPS - Department of Curriculum and Instruction of the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools - with the assistance of Jimmy E. Nations (former assistant director in MCPS)." The author explains the procedure to develop the learning centers: "Everyone in the course was required to set up a learning center in a classroom: to watch students use it: to talk with them about what was successful, what was unsuccessful, what they liked and what they didn't like; and then, finally, to revise and extend the learning center...The best feature of the inservice course was that each participant was assigned to a small discussion group (5 or 6) of similar grade level and/or interest. In these discussion groups they talked about their learning centers, how they had used them, and what the students had been doing...Their fellow group members asked questions for clarification and made suggestions for revisions and extensions. At the next class sessions, members described and evaluated the revisions and extensions that they had tried. In this way an ongoing process of generating ideas, trying them, and assessing their outcomes was established - with encouragement and support from fellow group members."

6.3 Evidence of effectiveness with users:

See section 6.2 above.

C. DESCRIBER CRITIQUE

Appropriateness / adaptability / technical quality:

The material will help teachers who are interested in helping students to develop skills for independent learning. The book is written in such a way that it gives many suggestions and considerations from which the user may pick those that are appropriate for his/her students. In this manner, plenty of flexibility and adaptability is offered to the user. One example of this diverse utilization is as follows: When describing each learning center, the format includes a section called "Extension" in which suggestions are made to expand or change the activities in the learning center, as time, space, and equipment permit. The developer encourages teachers to adapt the learning center to the curriculum they are already using.

Content accuracy/social fairness/community acceptance issues:

No evidence of social, ethnic or sexual bias is seen throughout the material.

Overall summary/comment:

The fact that the 7 learning centers described in the book were developed in classrooms by experienced teachers, principals and parents while participating in a workshop is the most outstanding characteristic of this product. It is well-supplied with practical suggestions on issues to be aware of when establishing and using a learning center; issues such as students' personal and group attitudes, as well as individual cognitive skills are greatly stressed. When describing a learning center the developer helps the user greatly by providing him/her with detailed illustration of how the learning center can look. Also, the activities to be performed by the students are dynamic as well as attitude- and cognitive-oriented. All these characteristics will attract teachers to use this product.

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